

Commencement
June 1, 2019

Please be seated.

Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Community College of Vermont's 2019 commencement ceremony. I am Joyce Judy, president of CCV, and I have the distinct honor of greeting you today to celebrate our 2019 graduates.

It is a privilege to be joined by Vermont Governor Phil Scott; today's keynote speaker, Ric Cabot; Vermont State Colleges Chancellor Jeb Spaulding; and Vermont State Colleges board members Megan Cluver, Dylan Giambatista, Church Hindes, Bill Lippert, Linda Milne, and Michael Pieciak.

Also joining me on the platform are this year's community service award recipient Steve Gordon; the Class of 2019's student speaker, Kayce Penn; Coordinator of Academic Services Lesli O'Dowd; and Academic Dean Debby Stewart.

I would also like to acknowledge the state senators and representatives from districts throughout Vermont who are joining us in the audience. Thank you for being here to celebrate CCV's Class of 2019.

Graduates, as you entered the field house this afternoon, you were greeted by a line of CCV's faculty and staff, who were such an essential part of your CCV experience. In your classes, the faculty shared their expertise, led you through your studies, and challenged you to learn and grow. From your first day at CCV to today, the staff have helped encourage and guide you toward achieving your goals. Together, they inspired and supported you on your path here today, and they join the faculty and staff line at graduation to be the first to congratulate you on your achievements this afternoon.

I ask the faculty and staff on the line, and the many others in the audience to my left, to please stand. Graduates, please join me in recognizing them.

Earlier today, some of you may have heard the bell concert performed from the University's bell tower by George Matthew, Jr. We thank him for generously sharing his time today.

I would like to recognize all of the CCV staff, as well as the staff here at Norwich University, who organized this event. We thank you for creating this special celebration of our graduates and their accomplishments.

Graduates, you came to CCV from different families, high schools, countries, and careers. Some of you speak multiple languages. Some of you work many jobs to make ends meet. Some of you are parents, some grandparents.

The class of 2019 is remarkably diverse. You represent all fourteen of Vermont's counties. You come to CCV from 8 different states, and 13 countries. Our youngest graduate is 17 and our oldest is 76. Each of your stories is different, but each of you now have a CCV chapter in common.

Your CCV education likely began with a Dimensions class, where you cut your teeth as students here. You met and bonded with each other, and were challenged to work and think in new ways. And at the end of your program, you took Seminar in Educational Inquiry, where you applied critical thinking to complex issues. These experiences marked the beginning and the end of your CCV journey. Yet what you take away from your CCV education as a whole is the knowledge that learning is ongoing, and that learning inspires change. Indeed, many of you have shared with me that your time at CCV had been nothing less than transformative.

Becca Kerr studied at our Middlebury center and is earning a degree in Early Childhood Education. She took the Assessment of Prior Learning class

at CCV, where she earned 33 credits for the skills and knowledge she'd gained through her work in the child care field. Becca's experience and CCV education have led her to her current role as director of preschool and afterschool programs for families in Rutland and Addison counties. She says she feels a huge sense of accomplishment to be finally earning her degree and setting a powerful example for her two young children.

Evan Spencer is earning a STEM studies degree from our Montpelier center. After graduating from U-32 High School in 2012, he started taking classes at CCV, but his first try at college was not successful. He went to work full-time, and later returned to CCV. He discovered a love for environmental studies. This spring, he completed nearly twice the number of hours required for his Professional Field Experience internship with the Fish and Wildlife Department. He plans to continue on to a bachelor's program this fall and pursue a career in conservation law enforcement. He says his degree is the culmination of a lot of hard work, and that it is not the end of a journey, but the beginning.

Ashley Finkelstein was a sophomore at Mount Anthony Union High School when she was introduced to CCV. She is a first generation college student and was determined to take advantage of every opportunity presented to her. She took the Introduction to College and Careers class,

took free classes through the dual enrollment program, and then spent her senior year in high school at CCV-Bennington. Though she faced personal tragedy during her time at CCV, she stayed the course, and she graduates today with a degree in liberal studies. After studying at CCV, she is prepared to continue on to a bachelor's degree in elementary education at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

Many of our graduates are new Americans who have worked hard to settle into lives here in the U.S. Five years ago, Usamah Abdulkhaleq came to Vermont with his family as a refugee from Iraq. He wanted to go to school, so he enrolled at Winooski High School, and soon learned about the Early College program. Early College allowed him to study alongside other adults, save money, and get a jump start on his college degree. He completed Early College last year, and today earns his associate degree in liberal studies. Usamah plans to continue on to a bachelor's program in computer science at UVM. He is the first in his family to earn a college degree. He says his mother is very happy, which makes him very happy.

Rosie Atherton came to CCV as an adult student. After 18 years in her job as a billing specialist for a home health agency, she was beginning to feel like there was no room for her to move up. She applied for a few jobs, but was limited by having only a high school diploma. She decided to come to CCV-Morrisville, where she earned college credits through the Assessment of Prior Learning course for the skills she'd acquired through her work

experience. This spring she earns both a degree in administrative management and a certificate in bookkeeping. Today she is working as a financial coordinator at a local dental practice. She says she loves her work, and now sees potential to grow her career in accounting and bookkeeping.

Betsy Trucott studied at our Newport center, and today she earns a degree in STEM studies. Betsy started college at UVM, but had to leave there in 2007. She says she never thought she'd have the chance to return to school. When she arrived at CCV-Newport, she was determined to give it her all. She found a network of support, and has become a leader and a role model for others. Betsy hopes to continue her education and is interested in pursuing a career in teaching.

Like many of you, Betsy is a first generation college student. I would like to ask all of you who are the first in your family to earn a college degree to stand at this time and be recognized.

Brenden and Laura McCutcheon are husband and wife, and they are both military veterans. Brenden says that even with his military experience, he felt his options were limited without a college degree. CCV gave him the freedom and the flexibility to pursue higher education while balancing family and work responsibilities. He graduates today with a degree in STEM studies.

After serving in the military, Laura was a stay-at-home mom who wanted to do more. She was nervous about starting college classes, but

found a welcoming and supportive community at CCV- Rutland. Laura graduates today with a degree in design and media studies. Both she and Brenden plan to pursue bachelor's degrees at Castleton University.

We congratulate Brenden and Laura on the accomplishment they share today, and we thank them for their military service. Each and every one of our veteran and military graduates have made significant sacrifices to get to this point. We thank you for your bravery, your integrity, and your service to this country. I would like to ask all veteran and military graduates to stand at this time and be recognized.

While each of your stories is unique, you share a common experience as graduates of CCV. As you go on to your next chapters, it is my hope that you will continue to embrace learning as an ongoing process, and one that so often leads to empowerment and growth. We pause today to recognize the achievements of each one of you and to celebrate this special moment.

Congratulations, Class of 2019!

At this time, I would like to invite the Governor of the State of Vermont, Phil Scott, to the podium to greet and congratulate the class of 2019. Governor Scott.

At CCV, we take great pride in community service, encouraging students, faculty, and staff to become more involved citizens. At commencement, we honor individuals who have given their time and energy in service to others.

I would like to invite Steve Gordon to join me at the podium.

The Community Service Award is presented each year in recognition of sustained and profound service to our state. This year it is my distinct privilege to present this award to Steve Gordon.

Steve is president and CEO of Brattleboro Memorial Hospital, and has led a distinguished career in hospital and health care systems. He demonstrates a real commitment to improving the lives of others. He is actively involved in several local non-profits, and he works with the best interest of whole communities in mind, seeking a greater level of health and well-being for all.

Brattleboro Memorial Hospital is a valued partner. CCV and BMH have worked together to provide career opportunities for Vermonters and meet the workforce needs of the Hospital. The College to Careers program, which prepares students to become certified medical assistants, is now in its fourth year. More recently, we have joined forces to build a new program in

environmental services. Steve's forward-thinking, collaborative approach makes this partnership a true success.

Steve, we thank you for your service to Vermont. It is an honor to present you with this award.

Many CCV students are active leaders in their centers and in their communities, and dedicate a great deal of time and effort to supporting the people around them.

This year, we are very pleased to present the student service award to A.J. Eversole and Virginia Litchfield. Will A.J. and Virginia please join me at the podium?

A.J. Eversole grew up in Florida, and moved to Vermont during his senior year of high school, where he eventually dropped out. He met his future wife, who was a CCV student at the time, and she convinced him to return to school. He started taking CCV classes in 2011. Three years later, A.J. joined the Air Force and was stationed in San Antonio, Texas. When he came to Vermont to attend his wife's graduation from Johnson State College, he was inspired to finish his own education. He has been taking online classes while continuing to work full-time for the Air Force. A.J. has also

worked with Habitat for Humanity, and has earned many honors and awards for his service in the military. He recently used what he learned in his CCV classes to write a software program for the Department of Defense. A.J. graduates today with a degree in computer systems management.

Virginia Litchfield came to CCV for a second chance. She started college after high school, but family obligations got in the way of her studies. She became a single mom who was also working full-time, and came to CCV because she wanted to create a better life for herself and her family. Virginia is currently in her second year of service with AmeriCorps, where she has been working with the Burlington Community Justice Center to pursue her interests in restorative justice and education reform. She hopes to eventually go on to law school, and she plans to spend her life working with marginalized populations and building strong, inclusive communities.

Congratulations to both of you on receiving this award. We wish you the best of luck.

Graduates, today you become CCV alumni. In that role, you will always be members of the CCV community. With generous support from past graduates, every year we award the alumni scholarship to graduates who plan to continue their education at a four-year college.

This year, we are proud to award the alumni scholarship to Chrystal Bean and Virginia Litchfield. Will Chrystal and Virginia please join me at the podium?

Chrystal Bean studied at our Rutland center, and earns a degree in visual arts. She will transfer to Castleton University in the fall, where she will pursue studio art.

Virginia Litchfield graduates from our Winooski center with a degree in liberal arts. This spring, she began work toward a bachelor's degree in professional studies at Northern Vermont University.

Congratulations to Chrystal and Virginia on receiving the 2019 Alumni Scholarship.

Now, graduates, you will hear from one of your own. The Student Speaker for the Class of 2019 is Kayce Penn, from CCV's Upper Valley academic center.

Here to introduce Kayce is Coordinator of Academic Services Lesli O'Dowd.

At this time, I am pleased to introduce our keynote speaker, Ric Cabot.

Ric is the president and CEO of Cabot Hosiery Mills/Darn Tough Vermont. Though Ric was trained in journalism and marketing, he has followed in his family's tradition of sock manufacturing. In the early 2000s, the family's business, Cabot Hosiery Mills, faced many challenges. Ric knew that saving the business would be nearly impossible. But, as he said in an interview, "I'm Darn Tough at heart...Because of the challenge, and because of how difficult it was—that's why I took it on." He believed that innovating could save the mill. He wanted to focus on quality, and he wanted to focus on Vermont. He started Darn Tough in 2004, and hasn't looked back. He proudly embraces a philosophy of responsibility, resilience, and community that sets a powerful example.

We are pleased to have Ric here today to address the Class of 2019.
Ric.

2019 marks the fourth year of the CCV chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an international honor society for community college students who demonstrate academic integrity and excellence. You likely noticed when these students entered the field house that they are wearing yellow stoles, which symbolize their membership in PTK. Will all graduating members of Phi Theta Kappa stand at this time to be recognized?

It is now time to turn our attention to the moment you have been waiting for: the awarding of your degrees. The many people who have helped you reach this moment are here in the audience to celebrate your achievement. I ask the families, friends, and supporters of our graduates to rise. Graduates, please join me in thanking them.

CCV has a long-standing tradition that you will share in today. As you leave the platform after receiving your diplomas, CCV staff members will present you with a red carnation. This flower is a symbol of the many people in your lives who have helped you reach this day.

Now, Academic Dean Debby Stewart will present the class of 2019.

By the authority vested in the Community College of Vermont by the Board of Trustees of the Vermont State Colleges, I confer upon you, the class of 2019, the Associate Degree.

Will the graduates from BENNINGTON please stand and come to this end of the stage.

I ask that graduates from all other centers stay seated until they are invited to come forward by ushers.

Now, graduates, if you would please direct your attention to the front of the main aisle. Kayce, please lead your class in moving their tassels.

Congratulations to the class of 2019. We are proud that CCV has been a part of your journey. As one of our graduates said, this is not an end, but a beginning. We trust that you will share your inspiring stories, empower those around you, engage in your communities, and work hard to build a bright future.

The group on the platform will lead the graduates out. I ask the audience to remain seated until the graduates have completed their recessional. Thank you.